

# Child Welfare

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## Mission

To insure the safety, health, and well-being of all children in Indiana, through development of prevention services and investigation of child maltreatment allegations.

## Summary of Activities

The **Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA)** protects children through the local offices of the Division of Family and Children (DFC) in each county. Child protective services (CPS) family case managers investigate abuse and neglect complaints on a 24 hour / 7 day basis. Through collaborative local decision-making, family case managers help determine how best to protect a child and how to provide the services needed to strengthen the child's family.

On the basis of substantiated abuse or neglect, a local court can determine that a child is a Child in Need of Services (CHINS). A child who falls under this definition may remain in the home of his or her parents, or may be placed out-of-home, depending upon the circumstances that lead to the CHINS determination. If family reunification is deemed to be in the best interest of the child, services such as home-based counseling and parenting classes are available to assist the family.



Services for CHINS are supported through a combination of state funds and local property tax levies. Expenditures for child welfare services have increased steadily over the past ten years, from \$85 million in 1990 to almost \$300 million in 1999. This increase is a result of more children being identified as maltreated or as posing a danger to themselves or others as a result of their maltreatment.

The focus of child welfare has shifted in recent years to reflect an increased emphasis on prevention. Through identification of risk factors, local DFC staff provide services to families in an effort to prevent or reduce instances of abuse or neglect. By consistently focusing on what is in the child's best interest, removing children from their home is sometimes avoided in favor of family preservation or reunification. In those instances where a child must be separated from his or her parents for safety reasons, every effort is made to ensure that a child is placed with a family member whenever possible. In cases where a court determines that reunification is not in a child's best interest, a child may be faced with special needs – age, health challenges, member of a sibling group, or member of a minority group. The Special Needs Adoption Program places these children with families who will provide a safe and secure environment for them.

A number of innovative and successful programs have been initiated in recent years to specifically target child abuse prevention. Healthy Families Indiana (HFI) is a home visitation program that provides families with services that promote healthy parent-child interaction, better family health, and enhanced child development. Step Ahead is a collaborative process through which local decision-makers conduct long-range strategic planning to combat local child welfare issues. Step Ahead facilitates the identification of common areas of concern and the pooling of local resources to address these problems. Local Youth Service Bureaus function as local outlets where youths can grow and develop through innovative educational, recreational, and civic programs.

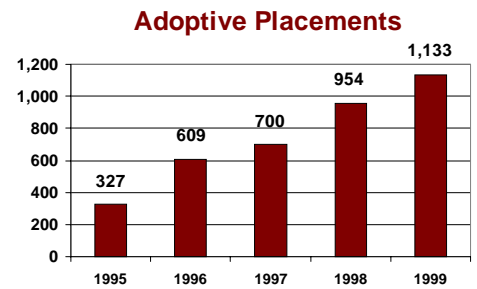
## External Factors

The Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA), a series of state and federal initiatives, increased the emphasis of child welfare services on the specific best interests of each individual child. Under ASFA, families are given shorter periods of time to improve the conditions that led to the removal of a child, so that the child can be placed in a permanent family environment more quickly. This can take the form of either reunification with birth parents, or adoption by another family.

## Evaluation and Accomplishments

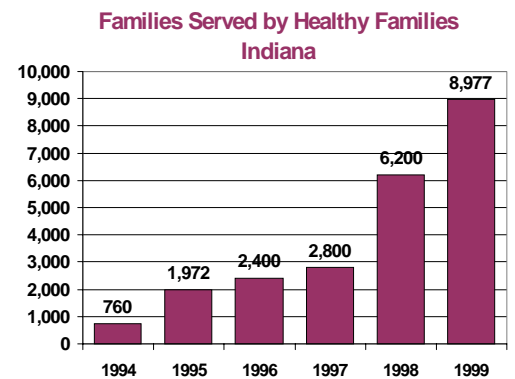
Due to increased public awareness of child maltreatment and improved staff resources, the percentage of abuse and neglect allegation that are positively confirmed has increased over the past three years, while the total number of allegations has decreased during the same period.

The number of special needs adoptive placements has increased sharply over the last ten years. In 1990, the first year of the program, 277 children were placed. In 1999, 1,133 children were placed, and approximately 1,200 placements are expected in 2000. Another measure of success can be seen in the average length of time that CHINS live in out-of-home care. In June 1999, the average length of time in care was 23.7 months. By June 2000, time in care had decreased to 18.96 months.



## Plans for the Biennium

The Healthy Families Indiana program will be expanded. The immediate goal is to reach 60% of pregnant mothers with prenatal services by 2002. Currently less than 30% of pregnant mothers are served by the program. Other plans will focus on average length of stay in care for children, and the number of children placed for adoption. The average length of stay in care has continued to fall below the 22-month mark. The next goal is an average of 15 months in out-of-home care. Indiana's implementation of the Adoption and Safe Families Act continues to create improvements in this area.



In the area of adoption, it is anticipated that the high mark of 1,133 children adopted in 1999 will be exceeded in future years. Projections indicate a goal of at least 1,200. At some point, as the number of children available for adoption continues to decrease due to the progress currently being made, the number of actual children placed may also drop. However, a primary goal will continue to be placement of 100% of the children available for adoption.

<u>Program: 0325</u>	FY 1999	FY 2000	FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003
<b>Appropriation (All Funds)</b>	<b>\$153,089,837</b>	<b>\$154,381,793</b>	<b>\$157,572,747</b>	<b>\$167,631,408</b>	<b>\$169,158,132</b>
<b>Expenditures</b>	<b>\$149,965,045</b>	<b>\$174,152,518</b>	<b>\$174,555,031</b>		

**Sources of Funds  
FY 2001 (Approp)**

■ General  
 ■ Dedicated  
 ■ Federal  
 ■ Other

**Uses of Funds  
FY 2001 (Approp)**

■ Personal Services  
 ■ Distributions  
 ■ Capital  
 ■ Other